



**WHEELER NATIONAL
WILDLIFE REFUGE**
DECATUR, ALABAMA
SATURDAY - SUNDAY
JANUARY 14-15, 2017

WORKSHOPS • CONCERT • SPECIAL GUESTS

THE REFUGE VISITOR CENTER IS LOCATED ON AL HWY. 67
JUST EAST OF DECATUR. TAKE I-65 EXIT 334



PRESENTED BY THE
WHEELER WILDLIFE REFUGE ASSOCIATION
AND THE WHEELER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

sponsored by
'TORAY'
Innovation by Chemistry

**WHEELER NATIONAL WILDLIFE
REFUGE VISITOR CENTER**
3121 VISITOR CENTER ROAD
DECATUR, AL 35603
256.350.6639

FriendsOfWheelerRefuge.org

12-15 / PRINTED IN THE USA

FESTIVAL *of the* CRANES

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ABOUT WHEELER WILDLIFE REFUGE

DECATUR, ALABAMA

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, located along the Tennessee River between Huntsville and Decatur, was established in 1938 to provide habitat for wintering and migrating birds. Considered the easternmost Refuge in the Mississippi flyway, this 35,000 acre Refuge attracts thousands of wintering waterfowl each year. It serves as winter habitat for the State's largest duck population as well as the largest population of Sandhill cranes. In addition to migratory birds, the Refuge hosts 115 species of fish, 74 species of reptiles and amphibians, 47 species of mammals, and 295 different species of songbirds. The Refuge is also home to 12 federally listed endangered or threatened species.

Wheeler NWR is comprised of a great diversity of habitat types such as bottomland hardwoods, wetlands, pine uplands, agricultural fields, and backwater embayments. These habitats provide excellent feeding, loafing, and roosting sites for waterfowl, as well as nesting sites for migrating songbirds. The Refuge provides a much needed oasis in one of the fastest growing regions in the state, with Madison being ranked as one of the top ten fastest growing cities in the nation.

2017 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

All events are FREE to the public unless otherwise noted.
www.fws.gov/wheeler

Community Partner activities are as follows and can take place before, during and after the actual festival dates at WNR:

NOVEMBER 29, 2016 - JANUARY 15, 2017

"Five Guys and the Nature of Art" Exhibit at the Carnegie Visual Arts Center
The natural world has been an inspiration to artists since the beginning of time. The outdoors still calls us from our frenzied modern lives to slow down, take a deep breath and appreciate the world around us. Tapping into that vibe, five gentlemen from the Decatur-Huntsville area create art in five different mediums, but all are inspired by the nature they see around them or from the elements of the earth. This exhibit features works of art by Gary Anderson, Robert Belcher, Dennis Brickell, Brian Corry and Steve Sasser. Through painting, mixed media, sculpture, pottery and photography, respectively, the artists communicate their perspectives of the world around them.

DECEMBER 19, 2016 - JANUARY 23, 2017

Delano Park Conservancy and Decatur Public Library
Delano Park Conservancy will be partnering with the Decatur Public Library presenting two story times at the Delano children's garden at Riverwild on Tuesday, January 10. Mary Currier, the children's librarian, will read crane stories in the park at 10am and at 3:30pm. The Conservancy will also present several books about cranes to the

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center

"The Givens Interpretive Center"

The 10,000 square foot Givens Interpretive Center located off Highway 67 east of Decatur offers a variety of displays depicting area wildlife and habitats.

Auditorium: A 126 seat auditorium with theater style seating.

Education Classroom: A 64-seat classroom with tables, chairs, TV, VCR, DVD, projector and screen.

Wildlife Observation Building: The Wildlife Observation Building offers a large, glass-enclosed room with bleachers and spotting scopes for viewing waterfowl and wading birds in the observation pond. November-February is the peak time for waterfowl viewing. The building overlooks a Backyard Wildlife Habitat Area complete with a waterfall which is maintained to attract songbirds, hummingbirds, butterflies, and other wildlife. Many species of birds are frequently visible here.

children's library.

The conservancy will again deliver coloring sheets to the elementary schools for students in grades 1 and 2, and bookmarks for those in grades 3-5 to promote the festival.

Decatur Public Library

- Story Walk: Song for a Whooping Crane on the Atkeson Cypress Trail at the Wheeler Visitor Center December 19th-January 23rd
- Children's Origami Program (Ages 7-10) learn to make origami swans, dogs, and cats in the Youth Services Department at DPL on Tuesday, January 3, 2017 at 2:00 pm.
- Children's Origami Program (Ages 11 and up) learn to make origami cranes in the Youth Services Department at DPL on Tuesday, January 10, 2017 at 4:00pm.

JANUARY 3-28, 2017

"Cranes in the Refuge: It's a Big Whooping Deal by Keegan Hutto"
Exhibit at the Carnegie Visual Arts Center

Local wildlife photographer Keegan Hutto's images of the Cranes at Wheeler Wildlife Refuge will be on display.

JANUARY 7, 14, 21, 2017

North Alabama Birdwatchers Society Birding Trips

www.northalbirding.com

Wheeler NWR White Springs Dike, 7 January, 2017
(SATURDAY) 7:00 am-noon

Join us for a trip to one of Wheeler's best known birding areas, as we look for waterfowl, raptors, cranes, a variety of songbirds, etc. Expect

2017 FESTIVAL OF THE CRANES • WHEELER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

to be behind locked refuge gates for 2-3 hours. Take the Mooresville exit off I-565, go south on Mooresville Road and meet at the parking area near where it intersects with old Hwy. 20 (34.627442 -86.880186).
– Dick Bruer, Leader (256-772-0411; dick.bruer@gmail.com)

Guntersville Dam North/Hawk Farm, 14 January, 2017 (SATURDAY) 12:30 pm-dusk

We'll visit the dam area and nearby fields, including the well-known "hawk farm". The dam area and farm are both excellent for a variety of hawks, eagles and falcons, including Bald Eagles, which nest in the area this time of year. Songbird variety is very good in this area. Meet at the north end of Guntersville Dam, off Hwy 431, at the pavilion parking lot on the left, as you enter the dam facility. – Ken Ward, Leader (256-837-5646; phinken@wowway.com)

Town Creek Embayment, Wheeler Dam, Joe Wheeler SP, 21 January, 2017 (SATURDAY) 7:00 am-noon

This trip primarily targets waterfowl and other water birds, but also includes some productive songbird areas, especially in the state park. We'll meet at the WalMart parking lot off Hwy 72 W in Athens (34.786933 -86.958486). – Dick Bruer and Harry Dean, Leaders (256-461-0626; hdean@hiwaay.net)

JANUARY 10-31, 2017

Old State Bank Student Art Exhibit

JANUARY 13-14, 2017

Festival of the Cranes 3rd Annual Art Exhibition at the Alabama Center for the Arts

The Alabama Center for the Arts, located in downtown Decatur (133 2nd Avenue, NE across from the Princess Theatre), will host the 3rd annual juried Festival of the Cranes Art Exhibition in the ACA Walking Gallery. The exhibit will run through February 24, 2017 and features selected artwork from students, faculty/staff, and alumni artists of Athens State University and Calhoun Community College. The show includes a diverse collection of art forms and media that depicts cranes, birds, waterfowl, ducks, eagles, owls, wildlife, and nature. While at ACA please also see Around the Bend: Drawings and Paintings by Robert Cox in the ACA Gallery. Friday, Jan. 13, 2017 - open 8am until 12noon. Saturday, Jan. 14, 2017 - open 9am until 3pm.

EVENTS AT THE WHEELER NWR SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 2017

6:30 AM • Sunrise Breakfast at the Refuge

The early birders get the biscuits! Come out and enjoy a good breakfast with other hearty souls in the Visitor Center classroom before joining former Refuge Manager Dwight Cooley on an early morning birding walk. Watch the cranes and other waterfowl arriving in the fields to begin their day of feeding and loafing. The Wheeler Wildlife Refuge Association will be providing and serving the Jack's 6th Avenue sausage biscuit, breakfast pastry, coffee and orange juice. The \$5.00 cost per person will benefit future refuge programs. (Classroom)

ALL DAY

Visit the Observation Building to view thousands of Sandhill cranes along with several Whooping cranes, ducks, geese, raptors and perhaps a bald eagle from the comfort of the heated building. There are bleachers and spotting scopes available along with volunteers and staff standing by to answer all your questions.

8:00 AM • Birding 101

Join members of the Alabama Ornithological Society/Tennessee Valley Audubon Society for a beginner course in birding. Learn the basics of birding as you walk along the grounds of the Visitor Center. Meet at the VC information desk.

9:00–10:30 AM • Children's Activity in the Classroom

Calling all kids (regardless of age) to join in the fun educational activities – create a crane mask, crane puppet and crane origami. Visit with the FWS Blue Goose and the ICF Whooping Crane mascots.

9:30 AM • Adventures with John James Audubon

Storyteller Brian "Fox" Ellis portrays Audubon in a dynamic performance that engages listeners in scientific inquiry and natural history, art appreciation and ornithology. Come spend an hour in the studio of one of America's greatest naturalists and wildlife artists. Listen to tales of his adventures in the wilds of America! (Auditorium)

11:00 AM • Auburn University's Southeastern Raptor Center Presentation

The Southeastern Raptor Center presents its educational program to teach about birds of prey. You can see these birds up close while learning about habitats, conservation and ecology. Hawks, eagles, falcons and owls will educate and excite audiences of all ages. (Auditorium)

11 AM-1 PM • Domino's Pizza Lunch (drink & dessert), sponsored by WWRA
A \$5.00 donation per person will be accepted and appreciated and will benefit future refuge programs. Have a good lunch and help support the Wheeler Wildlife Refuge Association. (Classroom)

1:30–3:00 PM • Children's Activity in the Classroom continues

1:30 PM • Erica Wheeler "A Sense of Place" Concert

Erica is an award-winning songwriter with 6 CDs to her credit. She is known for her poetic, visually-inspired lyrics, which have been described as 'cinema-graphic' due to their descriptive quality. She is also known for engaging storytelling, wry sense of humor and hilarious stage patter. (Auditorium)

3:00 PM • Auburn University Southeastern Raptor Center Presentation

The Southeastern Raptor Center presents their educational program to teach about birds of prey. You can see these birds up close while learning about habitats, conservation and ecology. Hawks, eagles, falcons and owls will educate and excite audiences of all ages. (Auditorium)

3:30 PM • Nature Hike with John James Audubon

Join John James Audubon, as portrayed by Brian "Fox" Ellis, on a unique bird watching adventure as he regales listeners with his in-depth observations of the species we happen to see along the trail. Long before Stokes and Sibley, Audubon published several pages of field notes for all 435 species of birds that he painted, an "Ornithological Biography," that totals several thousand pages. (Atkeson Cypress Trail)

5:00 PM • Day one of Festival of the Cranes comes to an end
Don't miss Day two!

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2017

8:00 AM • Birding 101

Join members of the Alabama Ornithological Society/Tennessee Valley Audubon Society for a beginner course in birding. Learn the basics of birding as you walk along the grounds of the Visitor Center. Meet at the VC information desk.

9:00 AM • Erica Wheeler Workshop

Gain a simple, creative process to discover your stories and sense of place connections. Take home a way to capture special memories and generate ideas you can use to create stories, songs, poems and more. All levels of experience welcome, from the perpetually curious to the published writer. (Classroom).

9:00 AM • The Comic Mis-Adventures of Lewis and Clark with Brian "Fox" Ellis as Meriwether Lewis

Join the Corps of Discovery in this humorous and informative blend of stories and song, journal excerpts and American Indian folklore. Imagine an evening in Philadelphia with some of the greatest scientific minds in Early American history where Meriwether Lewis reveals for the first time many of the scientific discoveries of the Corps of Discovery. Encountering grizzly bears and collecting soil samples, capturing prairie dogs and hunting for antelope, Lewis catalogues 122 new animal species and 178

new plants. In this original performance Lewis sings the praises of the geology, diverse flora and fauna, and the web of life that binds us to the land. The expedition was first and foremost a scientific expedition and this program brings the scientific process to life in what one reviewer called "The perfect blend of science and stand-up comedy!" (Auditorium)

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1:30–3:00 PM • Children's Activity in the Classroom

Calling all kids (regardless of age) to join in the fun educational activities – create a crane mask, crane puppet and crane origami. Visit with the FWS Blue Goose and the ICF Whooping Crane mascots.

1:30 PM • The Comic Mis-Adventures of Lewis and Clark with Brian "Fox" Ellis as Meriwether Lewis

Join the Corps of Discovery in this humorous and informative blend of stories and song, journal excerpts and American Indian folklore. See 9 a.m. description for more details. (Auditorium)

3:00 PM • International Crane Foundation with Anne Lacy, Crane Research Coordinator

Of the 15 species of crane in the world, only two occur in North America; one happens to be the most common and the other happens to be the most rare. But both of them occur in Alabama! Learn how and why there are cranes at Wheeler NWR, and the ins and outs of reintroduction of Whooping Cranes into the Eastern U.S. Presentation is in part, sponsored by funds from the Trowellers Garden Club. (Auditorium)

3:30 PM • Afternoon Birding with Erica Wheeler

Join Erica for an afternoon walk on the trails and around the grounds of the Visitor Center. The cranes will be on the move as daylight dims and the sun begins to set providing some wonderful photo opportunities. A great way to end the day and the Festival of the Cranes 2017!

